

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Lana Melonakos-Harrison and I am a resident of New Haven, Connecticut. I moved here a few years ago from the west coast and I love it here. I love the architecture and the seasons and the bountiful natural space to enjoy. I found a good job with supportive co-workers. But I worry that I will not be able to afford to continue to be a resident of this state given the continuous astronomical rise in rental prices.

I am writing to express my support of a rent cap, and while in general I support SB 4, I strongly encourage you to move this legislation forward with important changes that will better protect the tenants this type of legislation aims to protect. These changes should include:

- **The cap should be lower—I suggest 2.5 or 3%.** This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- **It should cover apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- **It should expand good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

My experience as a renter experiencing the high cost of housing, as a friend and neighbor who has witnessed the impact of weak tenant protections on those around me, and as a graduate student in urban planning, have all led me to believe that rent caps and good cause evictions are absolutely necessary to building a just, healthy, and equitable society.

I am a lifelong renter and I am familiar with the instability that comes from having to move because a landlord decides to sell the home or raise the rent beyond what me or my family can bear. It is disruptive to finances, to sense of home, and has influenced where I was able to go to school as a child. These are not issues that homeowners are required to experience. They may *choose* to make housing changes, while *tenants are forced to* undergo such changes because of the decisions of others.

My studies in urban planning have demonstrated that the housing crisis that we face, that is most potently felt by tenants, is entirely of our own societal and political making and is absolutely resolvable if we decide to invest in adequate housing for all members of society.

The current 4 percent cap plus inflation doesn't go far enough. It should come as no surprise that increases to rents under this restriction would still far surpass the amount that wages generally go up in a year. Choosing to maintain this wide margin for landowners demonstrates a blatant preference for those who already have the money to succeed and a disregard for those who are more vulnerable. And while I understand the initial concern that a more stringent rent cap would limit the amount of new construction or cause a deterioration in the quality of existing housing, these fears are overstated. We need more housing supply, and we know that takes hundreds of thousands of dollars and years to plan for and construct. In the meantime, we need rent stabilization and good cause protections to keep people in our communities, so that they can access that new housing when it's finally

built. Maintenance has always been an issue for renters long before this policy and will continue to be one that needs to be addressed with other complementary policies. What I do know is that having good cause and rent stabilization protections will mean that I can ask for repairs with the safety and security of knowing that my landlord can't displace me (by increasing my rent or evicting me) for asking. Knowing that I'm protected means that I can advocate for my right to safe and habitable housing without fear of retaliation.

A more stringent rent cap and good cause eviction will enable more people to call Connecticut home - both for those who have called this state home for some time, and for those looking to make a permanent change here.

Sincerely,

Lana Melonakos-Harrison
New Haven, CT